

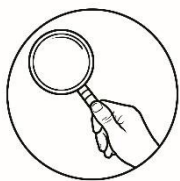
Introduction to the Philosophy of Human Person

**Quarter 1 – Module 4:
Methods of Philosophizing**

Lesson

4

Distinguishing Opinion from Truth



What is It

In the previous activity, you were challenged to determine whether a statement is a fact or an opinion. How did you find the activity? Was it easy? Now, let's highlight important points:

- It is a fact if the information is objective or based on data and observation. Also, it is a fact if it is verifiable. However, is a fact always true? If we consider an information to be objective and verifiable, then it is a fact, but if after doing verification, you discover falsity, then, a fact is not necessarily true.
- It is an opinion if the information is unverifiable and subjective. For instance, we verify that Class A is better than Class B because of their Mean Percentage Score or MPS, however, to conclude that Professor A is better than Professor B does not necessarily mean true, hence, a mere opinion.

How do we acquire knowledge?

Stages in the Apprehension of Concepts

1. Perception

- a. **External** – happens when we perceive things using our senses. **Percept** is the result of this process of perception. A percept is a mental concept that is developed as a consequence of the process of perception.
- b. **Internal** – happens when you use your imagination and memory. **Image** is the result of this process of perception. An image is a representation of the external form of a person or thing.

2. **Abstraction** - is a simple apprehension or conception. It is the act of perceiving the object intellectually, without affirming or denying anything concerning it. To comprehend is to take hold of the thing as if with the hand; an apprehension, as an act of the mind is an intellectual grasp of an object. **Concept** is the result of this process of abstraction. A concept is the abstracted idea of something. Example: A concept of a chair is held on by a person even if the physical presence of the chair is no longer there. And the abstracted idea of a chair will immediately help him to identify other chairs.

3. **Judgment** – is making a knowledge claim. It is an act of affirming or denying something about the concept. **Statement or Proposition** is the result of this process. Here enters the claim whether something is objective truth or falsity or subjective opinion.



David Hume is generally regarded as one of the most important philosophers to write in English (1711–1776). He was also well known in his own time as an historian and essayist. A master stylist in any genre, his major philosophical works like: *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–1740), the *Enquiries concerning Human Understanding* (1748) and *concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751), as well as his posthumously published *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion* (1779)—remain widely and deeply influential. (Stanford Encyclopedia).

Hume, in his quest for the truth, had introduced different types of statements such as:

1. Analytic Statements

- It means that the truth or falsity of the knowledge claim could be found within the statement itself. If you want to know if a particular claim is true or false, you do not have to go outside the statement itself. It's just like defining a concept. For example: A bachelor is unmarried man

or we say no bachelor has a mother-in-law. Similarly, we say that a kitten is a young cat.

- If you deny an analytic statement, it leads you to absurdity and contradiction simply because you are directly denying its definition. There's no sense to deny that a bachelor is unmarried man because by definition, it is true; and it's a verifiable fact.
- These statements are also known as truths of language, truths of reason, "is" of identity, a priori, matters of logic, or formal statements.

2. Empirical Statements

- It means that the truth or falsity of the knowledge claim depends on the state of affairs being claimed. If you want to know if a particular claim is true or false, you have to have its correspondence with facts or with the current state of affairs. For example: A kitten is on the table.
- If you deny an empirical statement, it does not lead you to absurdity and contradiction. It is verifiable through experience.
- These statements are also known as truth of fact, synthetic, matters of fact, or a posteriori statement.

From the distinction established by Hume (types of statements), a group of philosophers in the sciences and mathematics would adopt his idea that would lead to the traditional distinction of **two general types of knowledge**:

1. Formal Knowledge

- It gives emphasis on the validity or coherence within the system being employed.
- Method of deduction is used. (Formal sciences: mathematics, logic, geometry, etc).
- It is not dependent on the accumulation of empirical data but concerned with the structure or validity of their sciences within the formal deductive framework that governs them. For example, a mathematical calculation: $2 \text{ apples} + 3 \text{ apples} = 5 \text{ apples}$; it does not necessitate the presence of actual apples in order to acquire the knowledge of 5).

2. Empirical Knowledge

- It gives emphasis on the criterion of verification.
- Method of induction is used. (Empirical sciences: biology, chemistry, physics, the social sciences, etc)
- It works within the assumption that it is always probable that experience could prove a formal knowledge right or wrong.
- It is concerned with the process of verification from experience to establish the hypothesis.

Theories of Truth

- 1. Coherence Theory** – shows the quality of being logical and consistent based on the well-formed formula.
- 2. Correspondence Theory** – assumes that there is something given outside, in the realm of sense experience that we perceive as objective reality. (Philosophers: Alfred Jules Ayer and Bertrand Russell)

3. **Pragmatic Theory** – holds that truth is based on the good or practical consequences of an idea. Truth must have a successful application in the world. “If I do this, what is it for me?” (Philosopher: William James).

Sources of Knowledge

1. **The Faculty of Reason** - an analytic faculty that is able to determine the truth of analytic statements. The truth of knowledge claims made in the formal sciences uses the faculty of reason following the framework of coherence within the given system. (eg. triangle is a closed plane bounded by three sides)
2. **The Faculty of Experience or Sense Perception** – uses the five senses, including sensory extending devices for purposes of verifying empirical claims (statements) and thus, leading to empirical knowledge. It follows the framework of correspondence.
3. **The Faculty of Intuition** – deals with the immediate or direct recognition of self-evident truths (Philosophers: Plato and George Edward Moore)